



United States  
General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Resources, Community, and  
Economic Development Division  
B-247761



146143

March 17, 1992

The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman  
United States Senate

Dear Senator Lieberman:

You recently requested that we review aspects of Connecticut's program for developing a disposal facility for low-level radioactive waste and low-level waste disposal issues that are national in scope. Subsequently, your office asked for early information on the efforts of states, including Connecticut, to implement the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Amendment Acts of 1985. This letter responds to that request.

In January 1992 we issued a report discussing states' progress and problems in developing new disposal facilities for low-level radioactive wastes.<sup>1</sup> As discussed in our report, the 1985 act established milestones by which states or compacts of states were to complete specified steps in developing new facilities for disposal of commercial low-level radioactive waste. For example, states were to have new facilities operational by January 1, 1993. If that date is not met, states must do two things: They must either begin taking title to and possession of the waste generated in the states and assume liability for any damages that might result from not taking timely possession of the waste. Or they must begin repaying 25 percent of any amount the state collected in calendar years 1990 through 1992 in surcharges to each generator of such waste for the disposal of any low-level radioactive waste. By January 1, 1996, a state must, on the request of a waste generator, begin taking title to and possession of wastes generated in the state even if its facility is not operational.

Thirteen states plan to develop new disposal facilities, including eight states that are members of state compacts

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<sup>1</sup>Nuclear Waste: Slow Progress Developing Low-Level Radioactive Waste Disposal Facilities (GAO/RCED-92-61, Jan. 10, 1992).

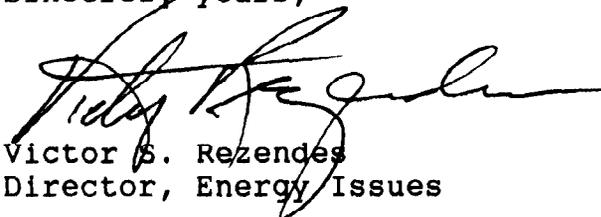
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and five states that intend to develop their own disposal facilities. Of these states, only California, which represents a four-state compact, might complete a new facility by January 1, 1993. Illinois and Nebraska, which represent two other compacts, expect to complete their disposal facilities in 1993 and 1995, respectively. Publicly available information indicates that four other states (including Connecticut) expect to complete new disposal facilities in 1996, and four states would complete their facilities between 1997 and 1999. The other two states have not announced target dates for completing their facilities.

Until recently, the Connecticut Hazardous Waste Management Service, which is responsible for developing that state's disposal facility, expected to apply to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in May 1993 for a license to construct and operate a disposal facility. The Service also anticipated that the facility would be ready to operate about March 1996. This schedule was based on the Service's June 1991 selection of three candidate sites for technical investigation. Following the site investigations, the Service would select a specific site for a disposal facility. In August 1991, however, the Service suspended site-specific testing because of errors made by its site-screening contractor. In January 1992 the Service awarded a contract to another firm to review the work of the site-screening contractor. The issue's potential effect on Connecticut's facility development schedule is unknown.

If you have any questions about the information in this letter, please call me at (202) 275-1441.

Sincerely yours,



Victor S. Rezendes  
Director, Energy Issues

Enclosure

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